

## Rahab's Imperishable Faith

By  
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*“By faith, the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had she had received the spies with peace.” (Hebrews 11:31)*

I stood in downtown Greenville the other day and looked at a stone monument erected to the memory of the Wildcat Division who trained at Camp Sievere and fought in France and Germany in World War I. As I looked at that marker, a tear came to my eye and a pang touched my heart because I remembered that a few weeks ago, I buried a man from Lake City who trained and fought with that division.

That man was a life-long friend of mine, kneeling by my side with his hand on my shoulder twenty-six years ago on that dark Saturday night when I found Jesus Christ. How fitting, I thought, to have this monument on Main Street in Greenville to remind the busy pedestrians of passing generations that these men did not live and die in vain.

Just as these monuments grace our city streets to the triumphs and victories of the heroes of the past, just so the Apostle erects a long line of monumental markers of the heroes of faith in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews. They stand tall and untarnished like lone sentinels of the night, keeping their lonely vigil over the silent city of the dead. It is fitting that we take time to return to that battlefield, move among their graves, and read again the inscription on their tombs. How heartening to see that they all were victorious. They did not all live to tell the story, but all finished in a blaze of glory, the glory of faith.

There is faith that triumphs over death. Enoch entered not the gates of Hades, but reached Heaven by God's special dispensation.

Faith that wrestles with time. Noah, moved by God, moved back the deluge 120 years, and in a race with time, prepared an ark and saved his household.

Faith that overcomes the infirmities of the flesh when Abraham and Sarah bore the son of promise in old age.

Faith that prevails over natural affection when Abraham offered to sacrifice to God the child of his old age, the very son of promise.

Faith that conquers the pain of life's last hours when Jacob, as he was dying, blessed the sons of Joseph as he leaned on the top of his staff.

Faith that defeats the temptations and allurements of the flesh when Moses esteemed the reproaches of God's people greater than the riches and treasures of Egypt.

Faith that rises in dauntless courage when Moses forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of Pharaoh.

Faith that surmounts the laws of nature when Moses parted the waters of the sea so that the children of Israel could walk across on dry land.

Faith that knocks down impossible barriers when Joshua led the Israel to march and shout until the walls of Jericho sank into the earth.

And perhaps the greatest triumph of all, we have faith entering the sordid hovels of sin, holding a mortal battle with iniquity in the house of a prostitute and coming off more than a conqueror. Waving a scarlet cord upon the walls doomed to fail, Rahab by faith perished not. To tone down the implications of her profession, men have translated her vocation as a hostess. But to acknowledge the truth of her harlotry pays greater tribute to faith and to the power of God to save to the uttermost even the vilest sinner.

She was the Old Testament's Mary Magdalene, very much like the outcast woman at the well of Sychar, but she was lifted from the depths of iniquity to heights of holiness and immortality. Her faith comes hand to hand with hideous lust. Here it struggles to the death with passion that leaps in the human breast like a flame of fire. Here faith touches with its hallowed fingers unimaginable debauchery and depravity. Here is a woman deeply dyed by sin but saved by faith. Here is the age-old provision of Calvary, salvation by faith for by grace are ye saved through faith. And the just shall live by faith.

Rahab had a saving faith. All Jericho was doomed. They were in the path of God's judgment and destruction. But one woman rose above it. Although the mark of death was upon her, she had a faith that saved. She believed the story of the spies. She acted upon her belief and hid them from the authorities. In obedience she brought her family into her house and hung the scarlet cord from her window. Her faith saved her.

Rahab had a singular faith. Jericho was being attacked, but the residents were confident that their defenses were sure. None of them repented. None of them believed they would be conquered. Rahab believed when everyone else believed not. She had faith among the faithless, a singular faith that led her to do right when others were doing wrong. It is easy to what everyone else is doing, but it is hard to stand up and do right when the crowd is going the other way.

Rahab had a stable faith. It didn't waver or change despite the circumstances. It's easy to believe in the probability of rain when we see the storm clouds rolling in. But she believed in the improbable. When others believed in their invincible position, she held firmly to her faith. The army of Israel was still across the Jordan River. It appeared that

they could not cross. Even if they got across, they had no weapons sophisticated enough to breach the walls of Jericho, no battering rams, no instruments of destruction. When they got across, all they did was march around and around in silence, not much of a strategy against the powerful walls of Jericho. But Rahab held steady. She kept her red cord hanging from her window on the wall.

Rahab had a self-denying faith. She risked her life for the spies. If they were found in her house, she would be put to death. By her actions she said, "I will die for these men if needs be. I believe they will take this city and destroy it, and if they do, I will die unless I risk my life for them."

Rahab had a sympathizing faith. She did not believe for herself alone. She wanted to save those she loved. Perhaps her parents had rejected her because of her shameful profession. Perhaps they resisted her invitation to come stay at her house. But in the end, they saw her faith, felt her compassion, and listened to her voice. By faith she saw the calamity coming upon Jericho and reached out in sympathy and compassion to her family. If your faith doesn't reach out to others, it is not the right kind of faith. Noah had the kind of faith that reached his entire family. The Philippian jailer brought all of those in his house to hear the apostles speak of a saving faith in Jesus. And Rahab's faith reached out to save her household. What about you? Is this the kind of faith you have?

Rahab had a sanctifying faith. The walls of Jericho fell all around her except in the place where she lived. Her faith was rewarded and she was saved. But not only was she saved, she changed her way of life. She forsook her harlotry. She became one of the family of Israel and joined them in their conquest of Caanan. Eventually, she married one of the princes of Judah. Her name is recorded in the ancestors of Jesus Christ, a gentile in

the lineage of the King of the Jews. From the lowest depths of degradation to the heights of holiness and immortal glory, her faith saved and sustained her.

We can believe the house will burn down when we see the flames stabbing the night. We can believe the ship will sink when we see the water pouring into the hold. This is not faith, but the logical conclusion from what you see. But we do not walk by sight. We walk by faith: “the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” When the world rushes headlong into sin and bids us come along, we stand our ground, looking to a higher calling, and walk by faith. We forsake the ways of the world and the sins of our past, and believe by faith in the saving grace of God. Like Rahab our eyes are opened to see a better way in the world, to find our place in the family of God. She would say with the Apostle, “Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith.”